

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-75. Canceled.

76. (Currently Amended) A method for printing a multicolor composite image formed from at least two component ink-laden images on a plurality of shaped pharmaceutical pieces each having at least one non-planar surface, said method comprising:

- printing a first component ink-laden image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a first print position;
- printing a subsequent second component ink-laden image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a second print position;
- moving a transport surface including said shaped pharmaceutical pieces from said first print position to said second print position, wherein said transport surface includes a plurality of transport recess portions; and
- positioning said shaped pharmaceutical pieces in a predetermined location temporarily fixed within a respective one of said transport recess portions at least between the first and second print positions, to thereby maintain registration of said first component ink-laden image relative to said second component ink-laden image so as to enable said multicolor composite image to be formed.

77. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, wherein positioning of the shaped pharmaceutical pieces includes positioning the shaped pharmaceutical pieces in the

transport recess portions such that the non-planar portion of each of the shaped pharmaceutical pieces protrudes above the transport surface.

78. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, further comprising positioning a vacuum hole at a deepest portion of each of the transport recess portions.

79. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, further comprising positioning a vacuum hole on a side wall of each of the transport recess portions.

80. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, further comprising applying a pressure differential to temporarily fix the shaped pharmaceutical pieces in the predetermined location.

81-100. Canceled

101. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, further comprising forming each said transport recess portion with a generally symmetrical pocket, and asymmetrically positioning at least one vacuum hole within a base portion of each said pocket.

102. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, further comprising providing each said transport recess portion with at least first and second vacuum holes in communication with the vacuum source.

103. (Currently Amended) A method for printing a multicolor composite image formed from at least two component images on a plurality of shaped pharmaceutical pieces each having at least one non-planar surface, said method comprising:

printing a first component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a first print position;

printing a subsequent second component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a second print position;

moving a transport surface including said shaped pharmaceutical pieces from said first print position to said second print position, wherein said transport surface includes a plurality of transport recess portions;

positioning said shaped pharmaceutical pieces in a predetermined location temporarily fixed within a respective one of said transport recess portions at least between the first and second print positions, to thereby maintain registration of said first component image relative to said second component image so as to enable said multicolor composite image to be formed
~~The method of claim 102, further comprising; and~~

positioning each said a first vacuum hole at a deepest portion of each said transport recess portion, and positioning each said a second vacuum hole along an inclined trailing wall of each said transport recess portion.

104. (Currently Amended) A method for printing a multicolor composite image formed from at least two component images on a plurality of shaped pharmaceutical pieces each having at least one non-planar surface, said method comprising:

printing a first component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a first print position;

printing a subsequent second component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a second print position;

moving a transport surface including said shaped pharmaceutical pieces from said first print position to said second print position, wherein said transport surface includes a plurality of transport recess portions;

positioning said shaped pharmaceutical pieces in a predetermined location temporarily fixed within a respective one of said transport recess portions at least between the first and second print positions, to thereby maintain registration of said first component image relative to said second component image so as to enable said multicolor composite image to be formed;
and~~The method of claim 76, further comprising~~

providing each said transport recess portion with a vacuum hole positioned along an inclined trailing wall of each said transport recess portion.

105. (Currently Amended) A method for printing a multicolor composite image formed from at least two component images on a plurality of shaped pharmaceutical pieces each having at least one non-planar surface, said method comprising:

printing a first component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a first print position;

printing a subsequent second component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a second print position;

moving a transport surface including said shaped pharmaceutical pieces from said first print position to said second print position, wherein said transport surface includes a plurality of transport recess portions;

positioning said shaped pharmaceutical pieces in a predetermined location temporarily fixed within a respective one of said transport recess portions at least between the first and

second print positions, to thereby maintain registration of said first component image relative to said second component image so as to enable said multicolor composite image to be formed;

and~~The method of claim 80,~~

applying a pressure differential to temporarily fix the shaped pharmaceutical pieces in the predetermined position, wherein the applying comprises applying a relatively higher pressure differential at the first and second positions and applying a relatively lower pressure differential between the first and second print positions.

106. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for printing a multicolor composite image formed from at least two component ink-laden images on a plurality of shaped pharmaceutical pieces each having at least one non-planar surface, said apparatus comprising:

means for printing a first component ink-laden image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a first print position;

means for printing a subsequent second component ink-laden image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a second print position;

means for moving a transport surface including said shaped pharmaceutical pieces from said first print position to said second print position, wherein said transport surface includes a plurality of transport recess portions; and

means for positioning said shaped pharmaceutical pieces in a predetermined location temporarily fixed within a respective one of said transport recess portions at least between the first and second print positions, to thereby maintain registration of said first component ink-laden image relative to said second component ink-laden image so as to enable said multicolor composite image to be formed.

107. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, further comprising arranging a plurality of carrier bars to form an endless loop defining at least one inclined ramp section, and positioning a feed hopper along said inclined ramp section.

108. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~59~~76, further comprising providing a plenum chamber beneath the transport surface extending from at least the first print ~~station~~position to the second print ~~station~~position, and communicating a vacuum source with the plenum chamber.

109. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108, further comprising dividing the plenum chamber with at least one divider along a transport direction of the transport surface, to define plenum subchambers.

110. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 109, further including providing an opening in at least one of the plenum dividers to communicate selective ones of said plenum subchambers.

111. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 109, further comprising positioning a slide element between a bottom surface of the transport surface and each said plenum divider.

112. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 109, further comprising positioning each said plenum divider between the first and second print ~~units~~positions.

113. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 108, further comprising providing the plenum chamber with a base having at least one opening in communication with the vacuum source.

114. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, further comprising providing a first plenum chamber associated with the first print ~~unit~~position and a second plenum chamber associated with the second print ~~unit~~position, communicating each of the first and second plenum

chambers with a source of vacuum pressure, and communicating ~~each of the transport recess portions~~ with the source via at least one vacuum hole.

115. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 114, further comprising positioning a third plenum chamber between the first and second chambers.

116. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 115, further comprising providing the third plenum chamber with subchambers defined by at least one longitudinal divider, and extending the first and second plenum chambers along an entire width of the transport surface without plenum subchambers.

117. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 114, further comprising dimensioning each of the first and second plenum chambers to have a width approximately equal to or less than a width of a carrier bar forming a portion of the transport surface.

118. (Currently Amended) A method for printing a multicolor composite image formed from at least two component images on a plurality of shaped pharmaceutical pieces each having at least one non-planar surface, said method comprising:

printing a first component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a first print position;

printing a subsequent second component image on said at least one non-planar surface of said shaped pharmaceutical pieces at a second print position;

moving a transport surface including said shaped pharmaceutical pieces from said first print position to said second print position, wherein said transport surface includes a plurality of transport recess portions;

positioning said shaped pharmaceutical pieces in a predetermined location temporarily fixed within a respective one of said transport recess portions at least between the first and second print positions, to thereby maintain registration of said first component image relative to said second component image so as to enable said multicolor composite image to be formed; The method of claim 76, further comprising

constructing the transport surface to include a plurality of carrier bars forming an endless loop, each said carrier bar including a plurality of ~~said~~ transport recess portions;

providing a plenum chamber beneath the transport surface and in communication with a vacuum source; and

dividing said plenum chamber including at least one divider that defines plenum subchambers equal in number to the plurality of said transport recess portions.

119. (New) The method of claim 76, wherein the first and second component ink-laden images are applied using an ink-jet printer.